

2020 Plumas National Forest Road and Trail Maintenance Project

Proposed Action

USDA Forest Service, Plumas National Forest, Mt. Hough and Beckwourth Ranger Districts, Plumas County, California

PROJECT LOCATION

The 2020 Plumas National Forest Road and Trail Maintenance Project is located on the Mt. Hough and Beckwourth Ranger Districts of the Plumas National Forest (Figure 1). The project area overlaps with the Walker Fire perimeter and expands beyond the perimeter to account for road segments in need of maintenance. The legal land description for the activities is: Township (T) 25 North (N) Range (R) 11 East (E) Sections 1, 11-13; T25N R12E Sections 1, 5-6, 8-18, 20-24; T25N R13E Sections 3, 5-10, 16-18; T26N R11E Section 36; T26N R12E Sections 1-5, 7-17, 20-29, 31-36; T26N R13E Sections 2-3, 5-11, 13-24, 26-33; T27N R12E Sections 13-15, 22-27, 29, 32-36; T27N R13E Sections 2-3, 10-11, 15, 19, 21-22, 28, 30-33; T28N R13E Sections 33-34; Plumas County, California, Mount Diablo Base Meridian (MDBM).

BACKGROUND and DIRECTION

The Walker Fire began on Wednesday, September 4, 2019, burned approximately 58,787 acres on the Mt. Hough and Beckwourth Ranger Districts. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

Management proposals by the Plumas National Forest (PNF) are determined by direction contained in the PNF Land and Resource Management Plan (PNF LRMP) (USDA 1988) as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) FSEIS and ROD (USDA 2004a, 2004b).

- The Forest Service is required to maintain roads for access and safety [23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 500.108, 36 CFR 212.4, Forest Service Manual (FSM) 7700, Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 6709.11, 27.62d, and Hazard Tree Guidelines for Forest Service Facilities and Roads in the Pacific Southwest Region (Angwin, Cluck, Zambino, Oblinger, and Woodruff, 2012)].
- Construction and maintenance work on forest transportation facilities with appropriated funds shall be directed to what is necessary and economically justified for protection, administration, development, and multiple-use management of the federally owned lands and resources served (36 CFR 212.4).
- Subject to availability of funding and obligations under agreements, the Forest Service is charged with maintaining all National Forest System roads to a standard that protects the Forest Service's investment, unless an economic analysis determines that postponing reconstruction is more cost-effective (FSM 7700, Chapter 7730 Transportation System Operation and Maintenance, p. 24).

NEED FOR PROPOSAL

Maintenance level 5 roads provide a high degree of user comfort and convenience. These roads are normally double-lane, paved facilities. Some may be aggregate surfaced and dust abated (FSH 7709.58, Chapter 10, Section 12.3). Attributes of these roads include: highest traffic volume and speeds, typically connect to State and county roads, culverts provide drainage, usually arterial connector, may include some developed recreation roads, and usually paved or chip-sealed.

Maintenance level 5 roads (high degree of user comfort and convenience) are double chip sealed and designed for passenger car use. The asphalt is deteriorated to a state that is no longer economical to maintain without replacement. The life of the asphalt is exhausted due to horizontal cracking, potholes, freezing and hot conditions, and water infiltration further eroding the asphalt. The asphalt is in such disrepair the surface cannot be repaired for a long-term uses and must be replaced.

Maintenance level 3 roads are open and maintained for travel by prudent drivers in a standard passenger cars. User comfort and convenience are low priorities. These roads are typically low speed, single lane with turnouts, and spot surfacing. Some roads may be fully surfaced with either native or processed material. Attributes of these roads include: low-to moderate volume, typically connect to arterial and collectors roads, a combination of dips and culvers provide drainage, and potholing or wash boarding may occur.

The Hungry Creek Road (27N09) is a maintenance level 3 (suitable for passenger cars) graveled road. The running surface is worn off and requires resurfacing.

Maintenance level 2 roads are open for use by high-clearance vehicles. Passenger traffic is not a consideration. Traffic is normally minor, usually consistent of one or a combination of administrative, permitted, dispersed recreation, or other specialized uses. Log haul may occur at this level. Attributes of these roads include: low traffic volume and low speed, typically local roads, typically connect collectors or other local roads, dips are the preferred drainage treatment, surface smoothness is not a consideration, and not suitable for passenger cars.

Maintenance level 2 and some maintenance level 3 roads have culverts and ditches that are clogged, road surfaces are compromised causing drainage issues, and brush is overgrown reducing road width and vehicle access. Hazard trees exist along road and trail prisms. The Walker Fire created fire-killed and fire-injured trees that are now hazards and unburned hazards exist along road and trail prisms.

Trail class is the prescribed scale of development for a trail, representing its intended design and management standards. Trail classes are general categories reflecting trail development scale arranged along a continuum. Class 3 trails are considered “developed”. Managed use considers a mode of travel that is actively managed and appropriate on a trail based on its design and management. Managed use indicates management intent to accommodate a specific use, there can be more than one management use per trail or trail segment, and managed uses for a trail are usually a small subset of all the allowed uses on the trail, unless specifically prohibited. Managed use helps to determine trail maintenance specifications such

as tread width and horizontal and vertical clearance to be maintained to standard (FSH 2309.18).

There is a need for road and trail maintenance along National Forest System roads and trails within the project area, which include:

- Resurfacing and maintaining NFS roads including primary Forest routes that provide access from Genesee Valley and Janesville to Antelope Lake.
- Changing one paved road's the surface type to gravel and maintenance level to three.
- Conduct routine road and motorized and non-motorized trail maintenance and abate and/or remove fire-killed, fire-injured, and green hazard trees that pose a threat to structures, facilities, National Forest System roads and trails, and human life, health, and safety.

PURPOSE FOR PROPOSAL

The purpose for this proposal is to maintain needed National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) roads and trails consistent with Forest Service roads policy and management direction.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project proposes to maintain 189 miles of National Forest System (NFS) roads and trails.

This project includes removing and replacing existing road surfaces, guard rails, signs, and culverts; reshaping road surfaces; cleaning ditches and culverts along maintenance level 5 roads (high degree of user comfort and convenience).

Activities along the Janesville-Frenchman Road (28N01) include grinding up chip seal, asphalt, or pavement and converting the road surface to a gravel. Application of magnesium chloride (a binder) to the new surface is proposed and the maintenance level 5 would change to 3. Table 1, at the end of this document, includes road names, numbers, and approximate miles for each maintenance level 5 road.

Activities along the Hungry Creek Road (27N09) include reshaping for drainage and adding gravel to the road's surface.

Activities along maintenance level 2 (use by high-clearance vehicles) and some maintenance level 3 roads (travel by prudent drivers in standard passenger vehicles), and the Lower Indian Creek Camp Site motorized trail (12M15) s include grading, culvert and ditch cleaning, ditch pulling, and brushing. Hazard tree abatement and/or removal, should hazard trees exist, is proposed for all roads and trails included in this project. Table 2, at the end of this document, includes road names, numbers, and approximate miles for each maintenance level 2 and 3 roads.

Activities along the Middle Creek Trail (12E08) include tread width and clearing maintenance that are consistent specifications for a class 3 (developed trail) managed for pack and saddle trail uses. The tread width would range from 18-24 inches and clearing for this trail would range from 72-96 inches (3-4 feet from centerline). Table 3, at the end of this document, includes trail names, numbers, and approximate miles for each motorized and non-motorized trail.

Hazard trees would be abated and/or removed along NFS road and trail prisms when trees have the potential to hit the infrastructure. Hazard Tree Guidelines for Forest Service Facilities and Roads in the Pacific Southwest Region (Angwin, Cluck, Zambino, Oblinger, and Woodruff, 2012) would be used. Trees ≥ 12 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) were proposed for removal. To establish ground cover scattering of trees ≤ 11 inches dbh and activity generated slash across specific locations within treatment units is proposed. Alternative treatments for smaller trees include grapple piling and burning, chipping, or masticating. Brush pulling and planting native conifer seedlings are proposed.

This proposed action may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances. The proposed action is within a category listed Forest Service Interim Directive, FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, Categorical Exclusion from Documentation, 32.2, Category 4, “Repair, and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries” [36 CFR 220.6(d)(4), p. 6].

The Responsible Official is the Forest Supervisor and a decision is expected in June.

Your comments are welcome. In order for your comments on the proposal to be incorporated most effectively, I would appreciate receiving them by May 29. **Electronic comments are encouraged and should be submitted via email** to comments-pacificsouthwest-plumas@usda.gov. Comments and attachments must be submitted in one of the following formats only: Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx), rich text format (.rtf), or Adobe portable document format (.pdf).

For additional information please contact: Katherine Carpenter, Environmental Coordinator, at katherine.carpenter@usda.gov.

Table 1. Road names, numbers, and approximate miles for each maintenance level 5 (high degree of user comfort and convenience) road.

Road Name	Road number	Miles
Antelope	29N43	21
Boulder	28N03	13
Boulder Creek-Lone Rock Campground	27N24Y	2
Janesville-Frenchman	28N01	15
Long Point Boat Ramp	27N41A	0.5
North Antelope Drive	27N41	5
Total Mileage		56.5

Table 2. Road names, numbers, and approximate miles for each maintenance level 2 (high-clearance vehicles) and 3 roads (prudent drivers in standard passenger vehicles).

Road Name	Road number	Miles
Maintenance Level 2 Roads		
Antelope South	27N62	3
Babcock	26N46	9
Babcock Crossing	26N46X	2
Babcock East-West	26N99	6
Babcock East-West Spur A	26N99A	1
Babcock Meadow	26N53	3
Babcock Meadow Spur	26N53A	.5
Babcock Ridge	26N45	5
Babcock Spur	26N46A 26N46A1	2
Boulder Spur	28N03H	1
Clarks Parallel	27N25	1
Clearwater	25N46Y	3
Clover Valley Camp	26N11	2
Clover Valley Spur	26N11A	1
Dodge Mine	26N08	8
Elephants Playground	26N10	6
Fitch Canyon	26N17	1
Frazier Cabin	27N02Y	2
Hungry Canyon	27N53	2

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Hungry Canyon Spur	27N53A	1
Meadow Creek	25N10	3
Middle Creek	26N54	4
Middle Parallel	27N06	0.5
Murdock Spur A	26N07A	0.5
Murdock Tie	26N07	5
North Antelope Drive	27N41	4
North Antelope Spur	27N41E	0.5
North Babcock	26N13	3
Orleans	25N42C	1
Poison Spring	26N15X	5
Poison Spring Spur	26N15XB 26N15XC 26N15XD 26N15XE	3
Railroad Grade	25N95	3
Railroad Spur	25N95B	0.5
Red Queen	25N65	5
Red Queen Spur	25N65A	2
Ridenour Spur A	26N16A	2
Roland-Dixie	26N15	5
Sheep Trough	25N72	0.5
Squaw Canyon	26N06	3
Squaw Cutoff	26N44	1

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Turner	25N42B	1
West Branch Little Antelope	26N03	2
West Slope	27N42	6
Total Mileage		120
Maintenance Level 3 Roads		
Argentine-Flournoy	25N42	3
Hungry Creek	27N09	3
Upper Last Chance	26N16	0.5
Total Mileage		6.5

Table 3. Trail names, numbers, and approximate miles for each motorized and non-motorized trail (class 3-developed trail, managed for pack and saddle uses).

Motorized Trail		
Lower Indian Creek Camp Site Trail	12M15	0.5
Non-Motorized Trail		
Middle Creek Trail	12E08	5.5